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"PORTRAIT POSTER
MINNIE MADDERN FISKE"

BRUSH AND PENCIL

VOL. III

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No. 3



CALENDARS, BY B. OSTERTAG

BLANCHE OSTERTAG

Opposite, on the door panel, are fastened half a dozen little square colored pictures. They look like tiles, with their strong black outlines and their few well chosen tints flatly applied. There is a knight-errant riding a white charger over bare brown hills; in the distance a castle on a hillside silhouettes against a white cloud; beneath is the word "March." Another shows a narrow Elizabethan street, gray cobble-stones, buff plaster houses with timbered fronts painted green, a driving rain and a valorous dame beating her way against the wind that blows her mantle wide. Its title is "April." A verdant green mead neighbors it, whereon yellow flowers blow and damsels clad in flowing orange robes and medieval coifs stoop to gather them; this is "June." Again, two lovers sit in a gondola, the gallant singing rapturously to his lute, while they float past terraced gardens where are marble steps and vases and black clumps of ilexes. This is "July."

Only a calendar?

Only a calendar. A printing firm issues one leaf monthly by way of advertisement, and people who know a good thing when they see it are gathering up these waifs and strays of decorative art. And not people of this town only. One leaf blew as far east as New York, blew into the impressionistic hands of Twachtman, and he wrote on to learn where he could obtain a full set. A few were sent by the artist to her old *bonne*, now the prosperous keeper of a small restaurant in the *quartier*. Here Paris poster dealers, ever on the lookout for striking designs, noticed them, and asked for more. One day, in

Jules Guerin's studio, so he writes: "In comes Liebermann; they catch his fancy at once; he wants to know who did them, and finally begs them away from me. Pretty good, that, for Liebermann, wasn't it? You know who Max Liebermann is?"

Most people know, at least by reputation, the able German painter. As for the designer of the little calendar, there was a time when her work was strongly influenced by him, just as there was a time when



SPINNERS, BY B. OSTERTAG

OWNED BY MR. F. A. DELANO

it showed a study of L'Hermitte. Not to admire, not to be impressed to the point of imitation, would argue something stiffer and less sympathetic than the youthful artistic temperament. It is by following in the track of first one and then another master that the student practices his steps until he can walk alone and strike out new paths for himself. There were days when this one made charcoal drawings in direct emulation of L'Hermitte, days when she painted weavers and flax-spinners like Liebermann, days when she dealt in dark Dutch interiors like Israels.

To begin at the beginning, Miss Blanche Ostertag is a young artist

of so much talent and of such a penetrating personal charm that it is hard to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. To speak of wayward grace, romance, enthusiasm, caprice that tries everything and touches nothing that it does not adorn, might be a personal description or an analysis of her style. She came to Chicago from St. Louis



PLACE ST. MICHEL, PARIS, BY B. OSTERTAG

OWNED BY MR. I. K. POND

via Paris two years ago, and once or twice she has contributed to local exhibitions. "The Book" was a narrow, upright canvas whereon a girl in black stood before a cabinet draped with blue and white and surmounted by a Della Robbia cast. All the lines were vertical, and a quiet, restrained little picture of delightful tonal qualities was the result. Then she exhibited a group of sketches of Paris streets, the ancient church of St. Germain-des-Prés, a glimpse of the Luxembourg Garden, a corner of the Boulevard Raspail or of that main thorough-



CALENDARS, BY B. OSTERTAG

fare of the Latin Quarter, the Boule Mich. There were in truth the skies and the gray buildings of Paris, kiosks, cabs, trees with green-painted palings about them, a statue or a fountain somewhere



PENCIL SKETCH, BY B. OSTERTAG

at hand. They were done with freedom and understanding, and they, too, had the rare beauty of harmonious tone. These have been her principal contributions to the larger exhibitions. She was the star of a pastel show, with some Dutch pictures, a Franco-American girl, in dashing scarlet, and, best of all, an 1830 damsel, in a crisp green and white-striped gown, who leaned on the back of a chair and contemplated "An Old-fashioned Portrait" in an oval frame. At one time

she showed twenty or thirty clever monotypes to a gathering of friends. A monotype is a thing that at a distance looks like a dry-point, having a similar mingling of gossamer delicacy and soft blurred richness. It is done with a brush upon a porcelain surface, and only



CALENDARS, BY B. OSTERTAG

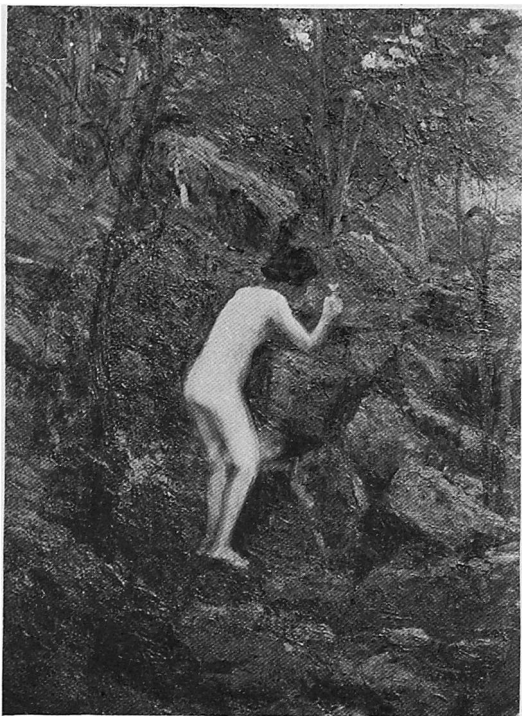
a single impression can be made from it on paper. To laymen the method seems an indirect and a wasteful one, yet some subtle peculiarities of its own endears it to artists, who are apt to be wasteful folk, and Miss Ostertag uses it with notable success. In such varied themes as lonely footpaths at night-fall, French students sitting at a restaurant table with a poverty-stricken but rakish air, quaint ladies with their chins enfolded in the strange swathing head-gear of Holbein's portraits, St. Cunegonda, wearing a massive iron crown on her flowing tresses, the Lady of Shalott, tangled in her magic web, a modern girl looking up from under a wide, feathered hat. All



SKETCH, BY B. OSTERTAG

of these things have been applauded by public and critics, but either from carelessness or caprice the young artist seldom exhibits. One must ascend into her own eyrie of a studio to realize how many themes and materials she experimented with, and with what fine feeling she has handled all. She has painted life-size portraits in oil,

low-toned pictures of domestic life, a few broad and simple landscapes. She has made brilliant essays at decorative art, from a processional frieze for a music-room to posters. One poster intended to advertise Mrs. Minnie Maddern Fiske is a panel in lilac and gold, particularly notable for soft, lovely color. Another of a mother and child enjoying somebody's oatmeal or cocoa is charmingly frank and simple, with its red frocks, flaxen hair and background of blue and white sprigged wall-paper, like old china.



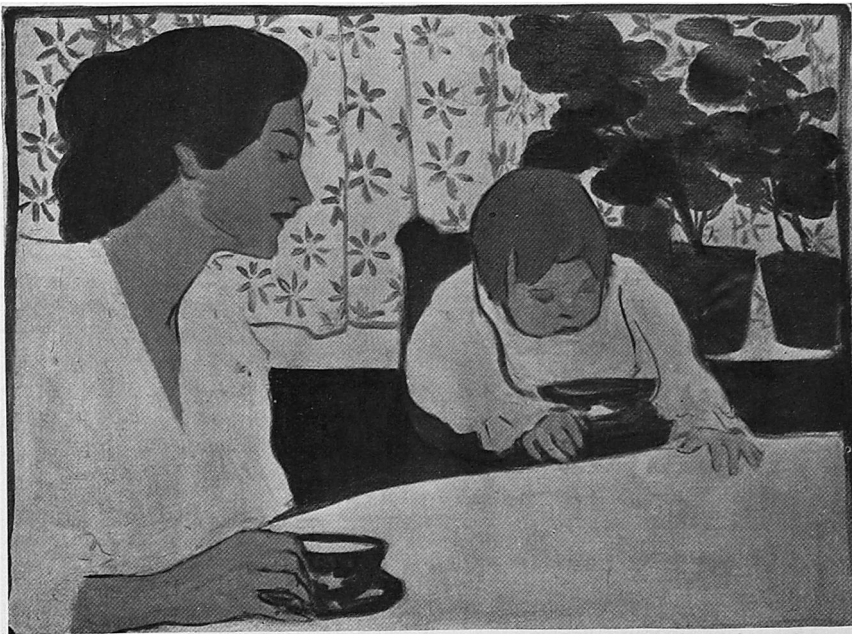
IN THE GLEN, BY B. OSTERTAG

One finds little trace in her work of the influences which have trained her. A month spent at the St. Louis Art Museum is hardly worth counting. Paris, where she had longed to go from the time when she knew what the dot on the map stood for, Paris held her for four years; but no more unacademic pupil ever came out of Julien's or Delecluse's or Raphael Collin's private studio. One incident of her foreign studies is worth recalling—the episode of her first salon picture. She had spent six weeks in Holland, where, among other things, she made some capital charcoal studies, and these a

friend advised her to "work over." She worked over them patiently, with the natural result of taking all the spontaneity out of them, and she began to think of submitting something more ambitious to trial by jury, although at the time she had been studying less than two years.

Only one who has studied at Julien's knows of the excitement there as salon time approaches, how the advanced pupils retire from the class to paint their salon pictures, or set up their easels in various corners, hire special models, and claim the first attention of the teachers, how the teachers are importuned to use their influence for pupils' admission, how teachers, in their turn, importune members

of the jury, trade votes and pull wires for their favorites. "Have you got your number?" "Have you given your number to Monsieur D.?" is asked all around. For the salon committee gives a number to each entry; by this number alone it is judged and recorded, and unless your good friends on the jury know your number they cannot cast their vote for you. All this commotion stirred the interest of the novice. With characteristic impetuosity she resolved to risk not one, but four complete contributions. And she would send them, not to the Champs Elysées, where the standard, as every one knew, had been



POSTER, MOTHER AND BABE, BY B. OSTERTAG

lowered by the tactics of Julien's pupils, but to the Champs de Mars, where the most progressive artists exhibited. Characteristically also she entrusted the entire business to her frame-maker, and knew no more than the sparrows on the roof what the numbers of her pictures were. By and by notices began to arrive. Monotonous notices: Mademoiselle, the committee of the Société des Beaux Arts regrets, etc. Three of these disappointing messages were received; all the slicked-up charcoal drawings were refused. She would not open the fourth note, but her chum insisted on reading it, and shrieked: "Number 33333 is accepted! Which one is it?" No one knew but the frame-maker. He pronounced it to be a pastel head. "But my

big oil? I do not hear from that." He shrugged his shoulders. She would certainly hear before long. Time went by, the lists were complete, the catalogues were being printed. Nothing was known of the oil painting, till one day the frame-maker received her in consternation. "*Mademoiselle, votre tableau—*" "Yes? My painting?" "*Mais,*

pensez donc, mademoiselle; pensez donc—"

"*Eh bien! quoi?*" "Your picture, you

know, your picture, the oil painting.

It went to the Champs Elysées!

Voyez-vous, there were two wagons at

the door. We were loading—so busy—

one for the Champs Elysées, one for

the Champs de Mars, and your picture

mademoiselle, was put on the wrong

wagon. And then—" "Well, and

then? Have you got it back?" "It

was accepted, mademoiselle! And

hung, yes, hung, on the line in the large

gallery!"

Accepted at both salons on her

first attempt! Delight and rapture!

But, then, she had broken the unwritten

law that says an artist must choose

between them, and not attempt to carry

water on both shoulders. Yet now

there arrived her season ticket, and

her six invitations from the two rival

salons. Kind Monsieur D. settled her

difficulties for her. In one catalogue

appears the name of Blanche Ostertag,

American; in the other B. Ostertag is

registered as born in England. Next

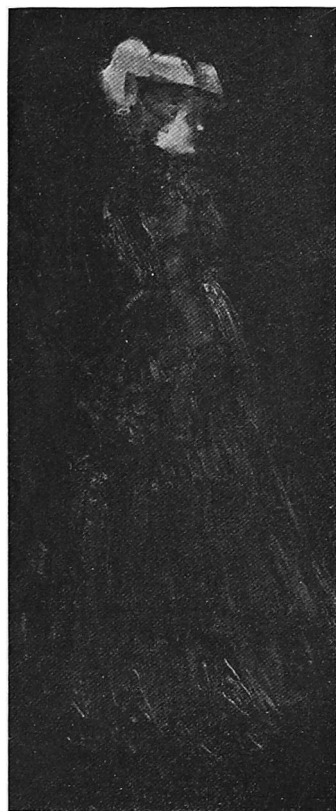
year she was more careful to contribute

only to the Champs de Mars, where a

capital pastel of a woman hung on the

line. It has since been exhibited in

Chicago.



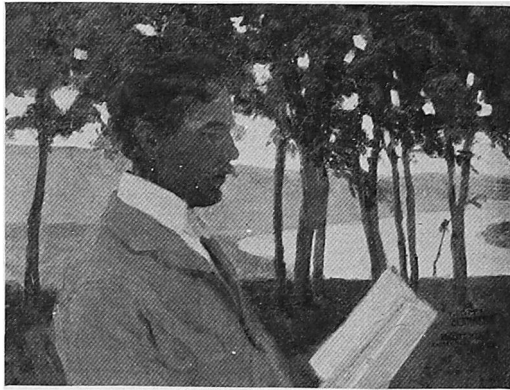
PORTRAIT STUDY OF MISS ANNA
MORGAN, BY B. OSTERTAG

After the Paris academies came a tour in Italy, devoted to studying the great decorative painters; Perugino, with his out-of-door effect; the Fra Angelicos in St. Marks, the Campo Santo at Pisa. She drank from the same source as Puvis de Chavannes, and learned as he did the secret of the Primitives' power, the rude, simple mass that belongs to the flat wall, the severity that best accords with architecture. Here, too, she admired the sumptuous Paolo Veronese.

Chicago must have struck cold on an impulsive mercurial creature,

fresh from the noble art of Italy and the lively intelligence of France. Perhaps the rule of contrast attracted her. At all events, here she settled down on the top floor of a building overlooking the lake where she finds decorative themes in the dull green waters and the smoke wreaths from countless chimneys. What she will do in the future, who can tell? What she has done in the past proves the possession of an alert, artistic spirit which expresses itself in many ways, but always with refinement and individuality. What one hopes for is the development of the new decorative and fanciful sides, because these talents are rarer among us than that of the portrait or landscape painter.

ISABEL McDOUGAL.



PORTRAIT OF RALPH CLARKSON, BY B. OSTERTAG

PICTURES AT THE MILWAUKEE INDUSTRIAL EXPOSITION

SEPTEMBER 10 TO OCTOBER 15, 1898

This collection was evidently not gotten together by the young set, those "boys" who are so convinced that on Degas or Claude Monet the world of art is poised as the globe on Atlas' shoulders, that "coming race" which is sure that Gérôme and Bouguereau have been allowed by Divine Providence to encumber the rising geniuses all too long. I remember talking to a young Hollander just returned to his native land from study in Paris, and that I casually spoke of Gérôme's genius, and the look of reproach, the sadness of countenance as he said, "And has Gérôme a place in art?" He sighed as I replied, "The painter of the Death of Cæsar certainly has genius." "And what about Degas; has he genius?" replied the youth.